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AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

PROTESTANT DISSENTERS.

By the Rev. JOSEPH BERINGTON.

Cum tua prævideas oculis mala lippus inunctis,
Cur in amicorum vitiis tam cernis acutum,
Quam aut aquila, aut serpens Epidaurius?

HOR.

SECOND EDITION,

CONTAINING

A LETTER FROM DR. PRIESTLEY

TO THE AUTHOR.

BIRMINGHAM: PRINTED BY M. SWINNEY:

FOR G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON, IN PATER NOSTER-ROW,
AND R. FAULDER, NEW BOND-STREET, LONDON.

MDCCLXXXVII.

AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

Proteſtant Diſſenters, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

WHILE the buſineſs was pending, and you looked anxiouſly to its iſſue, I would not diſturb you. Indeed, that was not a moment for ſuch expoſtulations as I had to make, and probably you would not have liſtened to me. Other thoughts, and thoſe of a very intereſting nature, engaged your attention. But now when parliament has rejected your application, and diſappointment (for diſappointment ſurely you have felt) has checked the effervescence of your

minds, an individual, unconnected with party, and himself oppreſſed, may, he preſumes, claim a momentary hearing from you, and find it.

I can ſay with truth that I was pleaſed, when I heard of your deſign of petitioning parliament for a further redreſs of grievances. Men of little delicacy of conſcience might talk lightly of grievances, which they ſaid, the greateſt part of you did not feel, and which demanded but a moderate pliancy of diſpoſition to ſurmount; but you ſurely were the beſt judges of their real extent and preſſure. The mind of an Engliſhman does not eaſily bend to the ſmalleſt oppreſſion; and and if you felt yourſelves aggrieved by the obnoxious acts, you complained of, it will not be ſaid, that you might not aſk for their repeal, knowing what it is to ſuffer for conſcience ſake, I have learned to ſympathiſe in the ſufferings of others. I therefore, and the body of men to which I belong, wiſhed you ſucceſs in your application. But

But my benevolence, I own, ſoon received a ſevere ſhock. Your printed *caſe*, deſigned for the inſtruction of the members of both houſes, and purpoſely circulated through the country, was put into my hands. I read it. Many things pleaſed me much; but there were a few clauſes ſo illiberal, and ſo unfounded, that my mind recoiled with horror. I could hardly perſuade myſelf to believe that men of information, of policy, of religion, of improved virtue, could be ſo inconſiſtent, as even then to profeſs *intolerance*, when they complained of its injuſtice, and wiſhed to remove its galling influence from themſelves. You have done worſe than this. You have thrown out *inſinuations*, at once *falſe* and *malevolent*, when the object of them merited no ſuch treatment from you. Do you think your cauſe called for that ſupport?

Gentlemen! the charges I bring againſt you are ſevere and ſolemn: it is therefore incumbent on me to prove their truth.

The *corporation* and *teſt acts* were the two ſtatutes, of which you complained.—By the firſt, enacted in the year 1661, the 13th of Charles II, it is provided, "That no perſon or perſons, ſhall for ever hereafter be placed, elected, or choſen in, or to, any corporation-offices, that ſhall not have, within one year before ſuch election, or choice, taken the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the rites of the church of *England*."—By the *teſt act*, made in 1672, the 25th of the ſame reign it is enacted, "That all and every perſon or perſons, that ſhall be admitted, entered, placed, or taken, into any office, or offices, civil, or military, or ſhall receive any pay, ſalary, fee, or wages, by reaſon of any patent or grant of his majeſty, or ſhall have command or place of truſt from or under his majeſty, his heirs or ſucceſſors, or by his or their authority, or by authority derived from him or them, within this realm of England, dominion of Wales, or town of Berwick upon Tweed, or in his majeſty's navy, or in the

ſeveral

ſeveral iſlands of Jerſey and Guernſey, or that ſhall be admitted into any ſervice or employment in his majeſty's houſhold or family, — ſhall receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the uſage of the church of *England*, within three months after his or their admittance in, or receiving their ſaid authority and employment, in ſome public church, upon the Lord's day commonly called Sunday, immediately after divine ſervice."

You briefly relate the circumſtances in which theſe acts paſſed, and I cannot ſay they are miſtated. That, regarding corporations, you obſerve, paſſed in a period of great heat and violence, the year after the reſtoration, and *probably*, you ſay, was deſigned againſt *ſome* of the proteſtant diſſenters. How gently is this expreſſed! The fact, as our hiſtorians you well know, relate it, was—The king, with his miniſters, and the majority in both houſes, hated the preſbyterians, whom they conſidered as the authors of the late rebellion.

In their hands remained ſtill great power, for, during the protectorate, they had been appointed magiſtrates in all the country towns. To leave authority in ſuch hands ſeemed dangerous; it was therefore judged expedient to regulate the corporations, and to expel thoſe magiſtrates, whoſe principles were inimical to the conſtitution civil and eccleſiaſtical. This gave riſe to the *corporation-act*.—It was beſides rumoured that new plots were forming in the ſtate, and they obviouſly would be marked for the authors, whom long practice had rendered expert in the buſineſs. The nation and parliament were alarmed, and a committee was appointed to inquire into the affair, that meaſures might be taken to ſecure the peace of the nation. It was judged expedient to frame the *act* in queſtion. Could men of a diſaffected and dangerous ſpirit be kept out of offices, their power of doing miſchief would be abridged. There was little truth, I believe, in theſe reports, but it anſwered the deſigns of

the

the court-party, and paved the way for the *act of uniformity*, which ſoon after paſſed.

To be ſo very guarded, therefore, in your expreſſions, was too punctilious. *Probably*, you ſay, the act was deſigned againſt *ſome* of your anceſtors. Indeed, Gentlemen, it was obviouſly deſigned againſt the whole family, though every branch might not have equally deſerved it. Why ſhould truth be with-held?

Your forefathers, it is true, were guilty of great exceſſes. But in thoſe exceſſes I can trace the gracious deſigns of Providence towards England. Its political humours were foul, and of that obſtinate nature, which only violent medicines could remove. Theſe you applied with a bold hand. The patient had ſtrength of conſtitution to bear it, and we have to thank you for our preſent health. The liberty we enjoy; and the bleſſings of our well-poiſed government are certainly due to the exertions of your anceſtors. So it is by

ſtorms

ſtorms and tempeſts that our atmoſphere is often cleared from noxious vapours, which otherwiſe might ſpread peſtilence and death through the land. The mariner indeed who is buried in the waves, or the landman who ſees his harveſt loſt, looks only to the evil, and laments his cruel fate; while minds more compoſed and penetrating ſee through the veil, and adore in the whirlwind the beneficent hand of God.

I think then you might have fairly owned that the *Corporation act* was *wholly* deſigned againſt you. Your claim to preſent indulgence would not have been weakened by the conceſſion; for how culpable ſoever the old ſtock might have been, you, their children, men of a new bone and ſpirit, could have nothing to apprehend from the moſt jealous government. Your loyalty, your patriotiſm, your reſpect for the laws, your manly exertions, your love of virtue, and your zeal for religion were all conſpicuous.

In

In ſtating the circumſtances, wherein the *teſt act* paſſed, you have not been ſo reſerved. " It, you apprehend, was *wholly* made againſt Papiſts, and not to prevent any danger which could happen to the nation or church from the Diſſenters."—The *eſtabliſhed church*, it is well known, could, at no time, have any thing to fear from you; therefore ſuch precaution muſt have been uſeleſs. Againſt *us* the whole weight of the ſtatute was aimed, and you detail the circumſtances of the time with apparent complacency. —We acknowledge the *truth* of your aſſertion; but, in theſe times of more generous humanity, would it have argued a degeneracy of character had you ſoftened the harſh ſtatement, by ſome qualifying clauſe. You might have ſaid that the bill paſſed, as the former againſt you did, in a period of *great heat* and *violence*; or that the Papiſts, perhaps, were not ſo culpable, as the rage of party repreſented them. How ſtern is the ſelfiſh eye in the view of every other intereſt but its own!

The

The *teſt act* paſſed in 1672, or rather the year after.—Since the year 1670, the nation had been juſtly alarmed. The counſels of the *cabal*-miniſtry then began to prevail, and never had power been committed to the hands of more dangerous men. Theſe were Clifford, Aſhley, Buckingham, Arlington and Lauderdale. Clifford was a Roman catholic, and in great favour with the king: Aſhley, ſoon after earl of Shafteſbury, a believer in no religion, had ſucceſſively joined every party, and in every party had taken the lead; he had ſerved Cromwell, and his influence with the *preſbyterians* was well known: Buckingham, a light and airy nobleman, had too little reflection to embrace any ſteady principles in religion or politics: Arlington, ſecretly attached to the faith of Rome, and in which he died, was not remarkable for his vices or talents: "Lauderdale," ſays Mr. Hume, "had long, been a bigotted and furious *preſbyterian*, and the opinions of that ſect ſtill kept poſſeſſion of his mind, how little

little ſoever they appeared in his conduct."

Such were the men, who held the reins of government. Their dark deſigns were not at once viſible; but it ſoon appeared that they meant to make the king abſolute, and to enſlave the people. They propoſed an alliance with France, and war with Holland. From the firſt, they ſaid, ſubſidies might be drawn; and were Holland ſubdued, it might ſerve to curb that romantic ſpirit of liberty and independence, which ſeemed to derive energy from contemplating the fame and grandeur of a proud republic.—An alliance with France was ſoon after formed, one article of which is ſaid to have regarded the eſtabliſhment of the catholic religion. But in this the king was not ſerious: he only aimed to get money. If the miniſters meant it, ſurely Clifford and Arlington were the leaſt blameable of the junto.

In the month of March, 1671, died the ducheſs of York, daughter of the earl of Clarendon, and in her laſt ſickneſs ſhe declared her belief in the catholic religion. This was the prelude to a more important ſtep. The duke, who had long been a ſecret member of that church, now threw aſide all diſguiſe, and openly announced his converſion. The new alliance with France, it is thought, inſpired him with this ſudden courage, and rendered him leſs ſolicitous of the affections of the Engliſh people.—Worldly prudence might arraign the meaſure; but if James was conſcientiouſly convinced of the truth of the religion he embraced, his conduct muſt be termed diſintereſted and noble. He could not be actuated by any ungenerous motive.

"Unaccountable terrors of popery, ſays Mr. Hume, ever ſince the acceſſion of the houſe of Stuart, had prevailed throughout the nation; but theſe had formerly been found ſo groundleſs, and had

had been employed to ſo many bad purpoſes, that ſurmiſes of this nature were likely to meet with the leſs credit amongſt all men of ſenſe; and nothing but the duke's imprudent bigotry could have convinced the whole nation of his change of religion. Popery, which had hitherto been only a hideous ſpectre, was now become a real ground of terror, being openly and zealouſly embraced by the heir to the crown, a prince of induſtry and enterpriſe; while the king himſelf was not entirely free from like ſuſpicions."

In 1672, as money was wanting to carry on the military preparations againſt Holland, and Charles would not aſſemble his parliament, whoſe juſt indignation he dreaded, other means were to be recurred to. Clifford dared to adviſe the ſhutting up the Exchequer, and retaining all the payments, which ſhould be made into it. In reward for this ſervice he received the ſtaff of treaſurer, and a peerage.—A general confuſion prevailed in the city, fol-

followed by the ruin of many. The bankers ſtopped payment; the merchants could anſwer no bills; diſtruſt took place every where, with a ſtagnation of commerce, by which the public was univerſally affected.

To conciliate the good-will of one part of his ſubjects, the king was diſpoſed to try an expedient, which he had before attempted. By virtue of an authority, which he ſaid, was inherent in him, and recognized by ſeveral acts of parliament, he iſſued a proclamation, ſuſpending the penal laws, enacted againſt all nonconformiſts, or recuſants whatſoever. To the *Proteſtant Diſſenters*, he granted the *public* exerciſe of their religion, and to the *Catholics* the exerciſe of it in *private* houſes. Thus the diſſenters, obſerves Mr. Hume, the inveterate enemies to the court, were molified; while the catholics enjoyed more liberty than the laws had hitherto allowed them.

But

But this proclamation, you ſay, was made *chiefly in favour of papiſts*. The king, I know, loved us better than he did you; and he had reaſon for it. You he feared; and it was his maxim to court his enemies. However, the *advantage* of the proclamation certainly was on your ſide.

On the 4th of February, 1673, after prorogations continued for near two years, Charles met his parliament. He addreſſed them with cordiality and confidence: "A few days, ſaid he, before I declared war, I put forth my declaration for indulgence to diſſenters; and I have hitherto found a good effect of it, by ſecuring peace at home, when I had war abroad. There is one part of it, that has been ſubject to miſconſtruction; which is that concerning the papiſts; as if more liberty were granted to them, than to other recuſants, when it is plain there is leſs. For the others have public places allowed them, and I never intended that they ſhould

ſhould have any; but only have the freedom of their religion in their own houſes, without the concourſe of others. And I could not grant them leſs than this, when I had extended ſo much more grace to others, *moſt of them* having been loyal, and in the ſervice of me, and of the king my father; and in the whole courſe of this indulgence, I do not intend, that it ſhall any way prejudice the church; but I will ſupport its right in its full power."

This language was ſenſible and manly; but parliament was not in a humour to be eaſily managed. Of the grievances they complained of, none was ſo alarming as the declaration of indulgence. It ſtruck at the very life of the conſtitution, and eſtabliſhed a power, abſolute and uncontroulable. Againſt the exerciſe of ſuch a power, they remonſtrated. The king defended the meaſure; nor did it ſeem that he would recede from the extravagant pretenſion: the commons, however, perſiſted. It was a criſis of great importance.

ance. Charles again reviewed his reſources, and he numbered the combined forces which oppoſed him: He ſaw the precipice, on which he ſtood. His own character alſo, naturally pliant and careleſs, came in aid of the advice which prudence ſuggeſted to him. To yield with the better grace, he aſked the opinion of the peers: they adviſed compliance. The king then ſent for the declaration, and with his own hands broke the ſeals. This ſtep gave the utmoſt ſatisfaction, and the commons expreſſed their warmeſt duty to his majeſty. In this moment of mutual goodwill, Charles aſſured them, that he would readily paſs any law, they might offer, tending to diſpel their ſuſpicions, and to remove grievances.

Many of the diſſenters, I believe, ſided on this occaſion, with the oppoſition. Among theſe was the alderman Love, you mention. Either they condemned the arbitrary meaſures which produced the declaration; or they found little ſatis-

 faction

faction in the enjoyment of an indulgence, of which the catholic party was at the ſame time allowed to partake. Such a wayward diſpoſition has been ſometimes known to exiſt.

Parliament, though apparently ſatisfied with the king's compliance, was not willing to let the occaſion paſs without marking their ſtrongeſt diſapprobation of meaſures, which, it ſeemed, the court had purſued with much ardour. They would mortify the duke of York in his new religion; they would give the king to underſtand that neither his own favourite miniſters, of the catholic perſuaſion, nor his brother's creatures, ſhould have it in their power to execute their deſigns without moleſtation; and they would tell the whole catholic body, if, as fame reported, they relied on any foreign aid for the eſtabliſhment of their religion, that they ſhould find an obſtacle at home which would check their moſt

ſanguine

ſanguine endeavours. The *teſt act* was prepared, and it paſſed into a law.

I allow then that this act was *chiefly* levelled againſt the roman catholics. Indeed its preamble declares it. But I have been thus minute in detailing the principal circumſtances of the times, that you may ſee, that they were not leſs a period of *heat* and *violence*, than that in which the *corporation-act* was made. In the nation, beſides, and particularly in parliament, it muſt appear, there was a great diſpoſition to curb the diſſenters, whoſe ſteps were watched, and whoſe general views were ſuſpected. Nor can it be doubted, though they are not named in the act, that the *teſt* was deſigned againſt every deſcription of nonconformiſts. In the lower houſe all the old loyaliſts were their avowed enemies, without counting the king's new favourites, who were numerous: Among the lords, few even of the lay peers could be their friends; and I need not, I think, mention the diſ-

 poſitions

poſitions of the biſhops, and of the whole eſtabliſhed clergy out of doors. Men thus affected to the diſſenters, would even more ardently adopt a ſcheme, which, under the ſhew of galling the roman catholics, would fall with equal weight on their enemies.—Allowing this to have been the caſe, are your preſent pretenſions leſs founded and cogent?

In our juſtification I wiſh it alſo to be obſerved, that, though the act was deſigned againſt the catholics, yet that few, even then, of the number, merited a treatment ſo ſevere. They had no concern in the views of Charles or his brother, in the ſchemes of wild miniſters, or in the machinations of bad politicians. They had ſuffered much in the royal cauſe, and were pining in penury and diſtreſs, under the additional preſſure of cruel laws. Had they moſt diſtantly approved the meaſures, unconſtitutional and diſhonourable as they were, by which it was pretended, their friends aimed to redreſs

redreſs their grievances, I am ready to admit that the teſt-act was a juſt curb to their deſires. Nor am I ſo blind a partiſan as not to allow that the act itſelf was wiſely planned, conſidering the apprehenſions entertained by many, that men then exiſted, who, to eſtabliſh their religion, would not heſitate to overthrow the conſtitution. Could theſe men have been marked, and the community have been ſpared, it would have been a meaſure more juſt and laudable: But the innocent muſt ſometimes ſuffer with the guilty.

Gentlemen, is it not better we ſhould both loſe ſight of thoſe days of heat and violence? Your conduct had been often cenſurable, and ſo had ours; but not in the ſame degree. Our political principles had both ſwerved; yours in favour of republicaniſm, ours of monarchy. We would have gone great lengths to have eſtabliſhed our religion; you did eſtabliſh yours, while the crown and mitre lay

trodden on the earth. I know not which is the worſt form of government, abſolute monarchy, or pure democracy: but I know that any ſet of men, who, in this country, ſhould aim to eſtabliſh either, would merit to be curbed by the ſevereſt laws. From the exceſſes of our progenitors we have both learned wiſdom: let us then rejoice rather in our reformation, forget what is paſſed, and be friends.

I therefore condemn the general idea, which ſeems to run through the hiſtorical part of your printed *caſe*. You wiſh to hold us out as the only obnoxious party; as if in the proportion we ſhall appear guilty, your innocence will be prominent. Could not your cauſe reſt on its own merit? The two ſtatutes aggrieved you. That was enough. And your preſent principles and conduct, inſtead of reſtraints called for encouragement and praiſe. He who, to enhance his own pretenſions, wantonly attacks his neighbour's fame,

ſame, leads me involuntarily to ſuſpect that,

Something is rotten in the ſtate of Denmark.

The account you give of the ſteps, which, at different periods, have been taken in parliament to procure you ſome relief from theſe oppreſſive laws, none of which were crowned with ſucceſs, proves indeed that you had friends; but does it not alſo prove that your friends were out-numbered by your enemies? There is a comfort, however, in the reflection, that virtue, on this unjuſt earth, does not always find admirers, or the rewards it merits. We papiſts ſolace ourſelves wonderfully in the reflection.

I ſhall now conſider, as far as it regards my purpoſe, the general *reaſons* you adduce, which, you think, ſhould operate a repeal of the obnoxious *acts*.

I.—" Every man, as it is now univerſally " acknowledged, has an undoubted right " to judge for himſelf in matters of re-

" ligion ;

" ligion; nor ought his exercise of this
" right to be branded with a mark of in-
" famy."

To this position I most cordially sub-scribe. It is founded on the clearest deductions of reason, and all the spirit of christianity tends to give it efficacy. Let it operate then in its universal extent. To admit general principles in theory, and to restrict them in practice, is, in a rational mind, the basest logic. Intolerance, that pretends to reason, is, in my eyes, worse than enthusiasm which persecutes from impulse. *Every man* has a right to judge for himself in matters of religion, you say. The only question then must be, whether Peter, or John, or Paul be *men*. You and I are men; so is the Jew, so is the mahometan.

" Nor ought his exercise of this right
" to be branded with a mark of infamy."
—Clearly it should not. As well give reason to man, and brand him for a *fool* be-

cause

cauſe he reaſons. The abſurdity is too glaring. Yet are you, and we, and all churches guilty of this abſurdity; we wiſh to faſten ſome opprobrium on one another. In this kingdom, all, who are not of the eſtabliſhment, are branded; but the mark on us is the moſt broad and flagrant. We do not merit it, however. And have not you yourſelves, in the very publication I am examining, ſinned againſt your own doctrine? Prejudice is too often an overmatch for principle.

II. "The holy Sacrament of the Lord's "Supper, being a matter purely of a re- "ligious nature, and being appointed by "our bleſſed Saviour only for the remem- "brance of his death, ought not to be "applied to the ſecular ends of civil ſo- "cieties."

Nor ſhould this poſition be controverted. Do you only allow that it applies to our ſituation, as well to your own.— It may appear ſtrange, that men ſhould have

have confounded things ſo evidently diſtinct, as are religion and politics: but as long as ſtates ſhall adopt the antichriſtian maxim of ſupporting excluſively ſome favourite ſect, ſo long muſt the confuſion laſt; and divine and human, ſacred and profane, temporal and eternal, earth and heaven, muſt be moulded into one heap, and the chaotic maſs ſhall be called *pure* chriſtianity.—Were you in power, would a proper diſcrimination, think you, be made; and would order once more exhibit the charming features of ſacred truth? Were we in power, it would not, I know, be done. While then we are ſo kindly ſolicitous to take the *ſplinter* out of our brother's eye, let us not forget that perhaps there is a *beam* in our own.

III.—" As diſſenters are univerſally " acknowledged to be well-affected to his " majeſty and the eſtabliſhed government, " and are ready to take the oaths re- " quired by law, and to give the fulleſt " proof of their loyalty, they think it

" hard

" hard that their ſcruple to receive the
" ſacrament after the manner of the
" church of England, or after the man-
" ner of *any* church, as a qualification
" for an office, ſhould render them inca-
" pable of holding public employments,
" civil or military."

This, gentlemen, is alſo our complaint. As you, we are acknowledged, and I truſt *univerſally*, to be well-affected to his majeſty and the eſtabliſhed government; with you we are ready to give the fulleſt proof of our loyalty, only we are not ready to take *all* the oaths required by law; and with you we think it hard that our ſcruple to receive the ſacrament in the church of England, ſhould exclude us from the common rights of citizens.

You know the oaths we refuſe to take, and as the ſubject of them is as much of a *religious* nature, as the ſacrament itſelf of the Lord's Supper, *your reaſoning* againſt taking

taking the latter muſt apply with equal force to them. We are required by thoſe oaths, to renounce the doctrine of *tranſubſtantiation*, to declare that the *invocation* of ſaints, and the *ſacrament of the maſs*, are *ſuperſtitious* and *idolatrous*, and that he, whom we conſider as the *head* of our church, has no *ſpiritual pre-eminence* over us. Can there be doctrines of a more abſtracted nature than theſe, or with which ſtates, it ſeems, ſhould have leſs concern?

Were you truly *conſiſtent*, yourſelves would refuſe to take theſe oaths. You would ſcruple to take the ſacrament, with a view to a civil qualification, even in your own church. How then, agreeably with this declaration, can you renounce on oath the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, to qualify yourſelves, it being evidently of a religious nature? It is not the truth or *falſhood*, of doctrines at which you heſitate, ſo much as at the incongruity of adapting religion to the ſecular ends of ſociety.

IV.—"The

IV.—" The occaſional receiving of the " Lord's Supper, as a qualification for a " place, cannot, in the nature of things, " imply, that thoſe who thus receive it, " mean to declare their full and entire " approbation of the whole conſtitution " and frame of the eſtabliſhed church ; " ſince men may be compelled by their " neceſſities, or allured by ſecular advan- " tages, to do what they would not do, " were they left to their free choice. As " from theſe motives, perſons may be in- " duced to conform to the eſtabliſhed " church in this particular inſtance, " though they do not approve of its " forms and ceremonies in general, ſo, " from the ſame motives, others may " comply with the ſacramental teſt who " are not even chriſtians, and who there- " fore cannot be ſuppoſed to wiſh well " to chriſtianity itſelf, or to any na- " tional eſtabliſhment of it whatſoever. " Hence it is apparent, that ſuch a teſt " can be no real or effectual ſecurity to " the church of England. *It is alſo ap-*

prehended,

" *prehended, that, independently of any re-*
" *marks upon the doctrine of papal diſpenſa-*
" *tions, the ſacramental teſt complained of*
" *may be received by many papiſts, becauſe*
" *many of them hold the church of England*
" *to be no church, her miniſters no miniſters,*
" *and her ſacraments to be no ſacraments.*"

The laſt lines marked in italics, are the paſſage, at which, I ſaid, my mind recoiled, and to that I alluded when I talked of inſinuations, *falſe* and *malevolent*. Its induction alſo was wanton, for without it, the general reaſoning was full and concluſive.

Nor is it I only, or thoſe of my perſuaſion, whom this ungenerous clauſe has offended. Men of all religions, with whom I have converſed, and ſome of your own people, have expreſſed their utter diſapprobation of it. I have converſed, indeed, only with men of liberal minds; and as long as I am permitted to chuſe my own company, I will aſſociate with no others.

others. When they ceaſe to be found, it will be time to retire to the woods.—One of your brighteſt ornaments, a man who does honour to human nature, and in whom his country may be proud, thus expreſſes himſelf:—" What I diſlike in the printed caſe is the concluſion of article 4, which contains a very unjuſt inſinuation againſt the catholics, none of whom, I believe, can be proved to have received the ſacrament at the church of England; and therefore it ought not to be ſaid that they *might* do it. Themſelves know this beſt; and their conduct proves, that they do not think it right to do it, whatever advantages they might ſecure by a compliance with it."

" Independently of any remarks upon the doctrine of papal diſpenſations."—Do you then really think that we admit ſuch doctrine? Ever ſince it was firſt objected to us, (and it was firſt objected, when he was eſteemed the beſt chriſtian, who could addreſs his adverſary in the foulest

foulest language), we have uniformly reprobated the calumny. We give no such dispensing power to any man. And in the oath of *allegiance*, lately prepared for us, do not we disclaim the position in terms the most full and unequivocal? There is in some minds, it seems, an inveteracy of suspicion which nothing can eradicate. True it is; we do not organize ourselves, and happy are they on whom nature smiled propitious in their birth.

But as if the charge of *knavery* were not sufficient, we must also be made *fools* in this business. It is asserted that, we admit a power which can *dispense* with our most solemn obligations. Why then have we not availed ourselves of it? For more than two centuries, we have suffered ourselves to be exposed to persecuting laws, and to feel all their weight, while you tell us, we had an instrument in our hands which could have broken our fetters at a blow. The prison door was open, and we refused to go out. No,

gentlemen,

gentlemen, ſuch folly is never found in man. What ſtronger proof then can you require of our not believing in ſuch a *diſpenſing* power, than that of our never having uſed it, when every motive, which can influence the human heart, muſt have urged us to it?

Had the inſinuation come from a vulgar quarter, I could but have deſpiſed it, as I have often done; but as it comes from you, I feel a ſwell of indignation in me, which is a proof, I truſt, of an honeſt heart.

You alſo apprehend, " that the ſacra-
" mental teſt *may* be received by *many*
" papiſts, becauſe *many* of them hold the
" church of England to be no church,
" her miniſters no miniſters, and her ſa-
" craments no ſacraments."

Before you laid your apprehenſion, thus openly before the public, that we *might* receive the ſacramental teſt, it

would have been prudent to have enquired whether any of us *had done it*, or whether we ourſelves thought it *lawful* ſo to do. The information would have been eaſily procured. I will tell you then; no Catholic ever has taken the teſt, nor can he with a ſafe conſcience.

Your caſuiſtry in this matter is curious. "*Many* papiſts *may* do it you ſay, becauſe "*many* of them hold the church of Eng- "land to be no church, her miniſters "no miniſters, and her ſacraments no "ſacraments."—You need not have limited your expreſſion. We *all* hold the church of England to be no church; if by *church* you underſtand a ſociety of true believers founded by Chriſt and his apoſtles.—We *all* hold her miniſters to be no miniſters; becauſe we conceive they have not their miſſion from Chriſt, or that they do not ſucceed to thoſe who were immediately ſent by him.—But we *none* of us hold her *ſacraments* to be no ſacraments; becauſe her *baptiſm* we admit

mit to be as valid as our own; though we reject her ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, as unſcriptural, and unſupported by the belief of antiquity. Such is our belief. Yet we refuſe to take the ſacramental teſt, becauſe it would be the profanation of a rite which by all men is deemed holy, and it would be the public declaration of belief in a religion, which the conſcience at the ſame time rejected. Even the framers of the act, who were our enemies, thought too well of our ſincerity to imagine it could be warped by ſuch weak caſuiſtry as you have ſuggeſted.

Now, gentlemen, let me examine your conſciences. Why do not you take the teſt on the ſtrength of this ſame caſuiſtry? You hold the church of England to be no church; otherwiſe why do you *diſſent* from her? Her miniſters to be no miniſters, as the hiſtory of *preſbyterianiſm* can demonſtrate; and her ſacraments to be

no ſacraments; or why do you ſcruple to take the holy bread from her hand?

As you ſeem diſpoſed to think us capable of acting with great *duplicity* in this buſineſs, either by virtue of papal *diſpenſations*, which yourſelves have conjured up, or by caſuiſtical *evaſions*, of which alſo yourſelves are the authors, a man, leſs moderate than myſelf, might be inclined to retaliate. He would bring before you thoſe times when the doctrine of *occaſional conformity* was ſo much agitated among you, and when many availed themſelves of it to retain, or to accept, benefices in the church, idly arguing that the *outward man* might conform, whilſt the *inward man* remained true and immaculate. But ſuch retaliation only ſerves to irritate, when every effort ſhould be exerted to cloſe the breaches which former animoſities have made, and to diffuſe a wider ſtream of general benevolence.

One circumſtance, however, is ſo prominent, that I cannot paſs it by. Look through

through the army, the navy, the civil offices, and all places of command and truſt, throughout his majeſty's dominions, and you will find proteſtant diſſenters in them all. For this they muſt have taken the qualifying ſacramental teſt. In ſimilar ſtations no roman catholics will be found; unleſs perhaps a few who, by ſome intereſt, have evaded the teſt, or if they have taken it, will be conſidered as having renounced their religion. Owing to this fatal ſtatute it is, that our young men of family are driven from their native country, to earn a ſcanty livelihood under ſome foreign ſtandard. I blame not men of your perſuaſion, if their conſciences can bend to it, for conforming to what the laws direct; I only mean to obſerve how hard it is that we ſhould ſuffer ſo ſeverely, and ſhould at the ſame time be charged with an hypocritical conformity, as if our conſciences were pliant as a glove, or as if we fattened in the ſunſhine of eaſe, office, and preferment.

5.—" The oaths of allegiance and ſu-
" premacy, and the declaration againſt
" tranſubſtantiation, have without the ſa-
" cramental teſt, been found *effectual* for
" more than a century to exclude papiſts
" from both houſes of parliament."

Reconcile this, gentlemen, if you can, with your inſinuation about papal diſpenſations. Theſe oaths, you obſerve, have been found *effectual*, for more than a century, to exclude us from parliament. And would not *diſpenſations* from Rome have applied equally to them, as to the teſt, had we believed in their efficacy? Or do you think us ſo ignorant as, in more than a century, not to have diſcovered that the caſes were parallel? Surely there is ſomething ſtrangely inconſiſtent in this ſtyle of argument; but I fear I can account for it. In ſpeaking of the teſt, the repeal of which you meditated, it was your intereſt to ſhew that its operation was chiefly felt by yourſelves, as even the papiſts had the art to evade

evade it. But as you foreſaw that, notwithſtanding your inſinuation, it might ſtill be urged by many, that its repeal would give a freer ingreſs to papiſts to offices, &c. No, ſay you, that cannot be, for the oaths of allegiance and ſupremacy, and the declaration againſt tranſubſtantiation will remain in full force againſt them, and theſe oaths alone, without the ſacramental teſt, have been long found *effectual* to exclude them from both houſes. The inſinuation of papal diſpenſations here would evidently have overturned your reaſoning.

Will you believe me, gentlemen, when I ſay that it is with real pain I dwell on theſe things? But it would have been culpable in me, when I was engaged in ſtating my objections to your *caſe*, not to have noticed ſuch ungenerous inſinuations againſt us, ſuch evident miſrepreſentations of our real ſituation, and ſuch palpable incoherence of argument.

On

On the remaining part of this *caſe* I have nothing to ſay: It has no reference to us, and its general reaſoning is weighty and concluſive. One idea there is, often repeated, which, I think, muſt have made moſt of your readers ſmile. You wiſh to perſuade them, that you are very ſincere in your profeſſions of good-will to the *church*. This, indeed, may be; but it will not at once be admitted. It does not harmonize with many declarations, almoſt daily renewed, by many of your friends in other quarters. We have heard of gunpowder, begun to be laid under the old walls, grain by grain, which, in its proper ſeaſon, will explode, and produce the deſired effect. The ſkill and perſeverance of your chief engineer are well known. We have heared alſo of predictions, uttered with almoſt inſpired confidence, of the approaching downfall of this ſecond anti-chriſtian church. Serious and well-directed efforts are practiſed to ſecond theſe aſſertions. The cordiality therefore of your

kind

kind profeſſions may, perhaps, be ſuſpected.

It would be idle in me to ſay, that I do not view with pleaſure theſe attacks on the eſtabliſhed church. For beſides that I am an enemy to all eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, which the ſecular arm ſupports; it is bringing home to their own doors that war, which they once ſo ſucceſsfully waged againſt us. They diſpoſſeſſed us of our inheritance, and they fatten in our ſeats. Ages muſt ſometimes elapſe, before a conquered people can cheerfully bend their necks to the laws of the victor. Beſides, the principles on which you ground your oppoſition are ſo congenial with the ſpirit of your boaſted reformation, that I know not with what ſemblance of conſiſtency, they can be rejected by rational proteſtants. I wiſh to ſee all reſtraints removed, which have been laid in the way of free diſcuſſion, and religious truths reſting ſolely on their own internal ſtrength. It is a poor compliment

pliment to any religion, to ſuppoſe that it wants the aid of ſecular indulgence or of penal ſtatutes.

I have not diſtinctly heared the objections, which were made to your *petition* in the houſe of commons; but I underſtand they chiefly ran on the beaten ground of the danger of innovation in the beſt of all poſſible conſtitutions in church and ſtate. I believe certain doctrines were alſo hinted at, which, ſhould they again warm the boſoms of diſſenters, danger, they ſaid, might be carried even into the political conſtitution of the ſtate. Such apprehenſions are, I dare ſay, groundleſs; and had our anceſtors permitted them to operate as effectually on their minds, the reformation at leaſt, which theſe politicians affect to regard as ſo ſignal a bleſſing, never could have been eſtabliſhed. I know not why *optimiſm*, ſpeaking of England, ſhould rather be admitted in politics, than in the moral ſyſtem of things. Every thing that is human

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is imperfect; and the paltry notion which, circumſcribing the view, fixes it on an imaginary excellence, will be an eternal bar to improvement. The general arrangements in church and ſtate can ſurely be meliorated, or the circumſtances of England muſt be peculiar indeed. What I ſaid of the *reformation* may be applied to the *revolution*. Why were not our forefathers authoriſed to regard their conſtitution as the beſt, for they knew none better? And had the maxim been ſteadily adhered to, the yoke of deſpotiſm might at this hour, have galled our necks.

The penal ſtatutes, of which you and we complain, were made at a time, when real or imaginary danger ſeemed to call for their enaction. It is univerſally allowed that no ſuch danger now exiſts. Shall the ſon then be viſited for the ſins of his father to the third and fourth generation? This is vindictive juſtice with a witneſs! No crime is committed; but penalties endure. *Salus populi ſuprema lex*, has

has ever been admitted as the great baſis of legiſlations: In our regard the order is ſubverted, and to puniſh even the unoffending citizen becomes the object of the law.

Gnoſſius hæc Rhadamanthus habet duriſſima regna.
VIRG.

It was once my wiſh that you, and we, and every Britiſh ſubject, who, for conſcience ſake, felt themſelves aggrieved, ſhould have united in a common petition to Parliament. Such a coalition of intereſts would, I think, have done us honor; and had no other good been produced, the meaſure at leaſt might have removed prejudices, and have made us better friends. But to judge from your preſent declaration of ſentiments, the day is yet diſtant, when we may hope to realiſe ſo deſirable a plan. We are the elder branch of the family, and as it would have become us, ſo, I think, we ſhould have been earneſt to have ſet the example of brotherly love. Your conſequence,

we

we well know, could have given weight to our juſt petitions: In that we were intereſted. But alſo we are too conſcious of our own real deſerts, as men and as citizens, to think that our alliance would have diſhonoured you. The blood which warms our veins, I once ſaid, is almoſt as ancient as the hoary cliffs, that ſurround our iſland; and our ſentiments, I truſt, have not degenerated from thoſe of our anceſtors.

It is eaſy to account for the prejudices which, in this country, were originally taken up againſt us, for they date from the reformation; and I can trace their progreſs through ſham plots, political devices, and popular rumours, for a long ſeries of years. But from the revolution, though the piece ſtill continued in the loom, I am rather ſurpriſed that hands could be found to work it. The mind then opened to large views: Commerce, agriculture, and ſucceſſively the arts of war and peace ſo much engroſſed general attention,

attention, that bigotry ſhould have died away, and party-prejudice ſhould have expired with it. It did not ſo happen; for bigotry ſtill lives: prejudices flouriſh; and the conſtitution of intolerance ſeems almoſt as vigorous as ever.

Will you accuſe me, gentlemen, of a culpable partiality, when I declare it as my opinion, that the Engliſh Catholics are the freeſt from rancour, from prepoſſeſſion, and from religious antipathies, of any general ſociety in the realm. I own, I may view them with too indulgent an eye, though hitherto I have not been ſuſpected of it. Suppoſe the caſe to be true, and account for it: or do not account of it; it is not therefore leſs true, and it does us honour. Shall it be, perhaps, that the mild treatment of our country has weakened every acrid humour, and given nouriſhment only to thoſe which may generate benevolence and candour.

Had

Had you not been diſpoſed to have joined us, to which you were free, and to which many of you might have objected, ſtill, why were hoſtilities to be commenced againſt us? Your printed *caſe* certainly ſeems to breathe this ſpirit. I pretend not that peace was before declared; but the character of the times appeared to have ſigned preliminaries, from which we augured great ſucceſs. We had been labouring to ſtill the animoſity, which, from idle preconceptions, hung on the minds of the multitude; when you, the great body of the Diſſenters, men of wiſdom and ſound policy, ſtep forward to ſtem the progreſs of benevolence, and to reanimate low prejudice and the rancour of misjudging zeal. I ſhall be told that nothing of the kind was meant: What then did you mean? The illiberal ſheet was carried from hand to hand; and it has been conſigned, with peculiar diligence, to the beſt repoſitories of records, *in perpetuam rei memoriam*.

I there-

I therefore rejoice in your defeat. Had you ſucceeded, it would but have ſtrengthened prejudices, and ſupplied freſh matter of triumph to the enemies of *real toleration*.

Since, in the year 1778, we obtained the ſmall indulgence which government thought proper to beſtow, our conduct has uniformly ſhewn that we deſerved it. It has, in truth, ſhewn that we deſerved a great deal more. The ſtep then taken was meant as a prelude to many more; but we at firſt only aſked for little, and ſince that have remained ſilent, that a pauſe might be made, during which our friends might ſee how much we merited a continuance of their protection, and that our enemies might ſee, how unjuſt were their prejudices, and how groundleſs the apprehenſions conceived againſt us. The time then, I truſt, is faſt approaching, when parliament will be again petitioned to take up our cauſe on a much wider ſcale than before, and to

grant

grant us a redreſs of every grievance. This we wiſh the public to know. It is not our deſign to take them by ſurpriſe: let our friends and enemies view our conduct, with what minuteneſs they pleaſe; let them ſcrutinize our principles with the moſt guarded caution. This we challenge; and as far as may be, we will bare our boſoms to their inſpection.

The propriety of granting, what was called a *complete toleration*, to men of all perſuaſions, ſeems to have been very generally admitted even by thoſe, who oppoſed your petition, in the houſe of commons. Such toleration would give ſome eaſe, as it would remove reſtraints from the practice of religion; but how it can be termed *complete*, is not readily underſtood. Men muſt have bounded conceptions of *liberty* indeed, who can perſuade themſelves, that diſſenters from the eſtabliſhed church have no juſt claim to any toleration, but that which barely regards their religious belief. My claim to an *equal* participa-

tion of all the rights of a Britiſh ſubject is paramount to every diſtinction, which a partial and unjuſt policy may have introduced; and he who abridges, or deprives me of, that right, is a *perſecutor*, however highly he may talk of toleration, or extol the wonders of his liberal mind. A Spaniſh inquiſitor, while the victim burns at the ſtake, talks even then of philanthropy, and throws from him with ſcorn the name of a perſecutor.

I have heared it even maintained that we Roman Catholics, in our preſent ſituation, are not perſecuted on account of our religious tenets: That the oaths and teſts, of which we complain, are only meant as an *ordeal*, by which government may diſcover who are well-affected, and who are fit to be entruſted with power. Let us then allow as before obſerved, that there was a time, when our political principles were juſtly ſuſpected, and that then the enaction of ſuch laws was wiſe. Is there now any ground for ſuch ſuſpicion?

Is

Is it not rather univerſally granted that no men are better affected to the preſent civil conſtitution than ourſelves? This being the caſe, what can juſtify the execution of theſe ſtatutes; when the very motive, which alone, in the firſt inſtance, could lawfully produce them, is allowed to ſubſiſt no longer? With the ſame equity might our former governors have introduced prohibitory acts, though no juſt occaſion had ever been given, and have defended, by the ſame reaſoning, the propriety of the meaſure.

However, let government firſt grant us what they pleaſe to call a *complete toleration*, (and I hope they will do it unſolicited to give more value to the preſent) that is, the free and public practice of our religion, with permiſſion to educate our children at home; and we may be diſpoſed to wait, till ſome favourable concurrence of circumſtances ſhall give both to you and us a general releaſe from all other reſtraints. It is not poſſible that this period

be very diſtant. The doctrine of toleration, which is making its way, in all parts of Europe, in ſpite of the obſtacles which eſtabliſhed churches, and bigoted ſocieties, daily oppoſe to its progreſs, muſt finally ſucceed; and the buſineſs will be done. Then, I think, it will appear that this boaſted *alliance* between church and ſtate, about which ſo many high-ſounding words have been uttered, was founded on a miſconception of things, and a palpable confuſion of ideas, in themſelves as diſtinct, as earth is from heaven. The evils, this ſyſtem has occaſioned, will then alſo be lamented; and it will be well if it ſhall not be too late to apply a remedy.

I have ſaid, gentlemen, what I principally wiſh to ſuggeſt to you. It may help, perhaps, to remove ſome prejudices from your own minds, or, at all events, it may obſtruct the ſpread of that impreſſion, which, the general import, and the clauſes I noticed, in your printed

caſe,

caſe, were calculated to make. I ſhould be ſorry to impute a motive to you, which I had raſhly aſſumed; but certainly the tendency of your expreſſions was ſuch as could not be miſtaken. In a long work, an author, through inadvertence, may ſometimes let words fall from him, which ſhould be conſtrued with indulgence. In a ſingle ſheet, where every expreſſion is weighed, and whereby it is deſigned to convey the moſt preciſe and unequivocal ideas, even critical ſeverity is put to defiance. I therefore inferred that you meant, Parliament and the public ſhould underſtand, that, though you petitioned for a redreſs of grievances for yourſelves, it was not your wiſh the ſame indulgence ſhould be extended to others. On this ground, you aimed to ſhew that you only deſerved it, and that the Roman Catholics particularly, whoſe plea, you apprehended, might be urged, not only formerly, by their miſconduct, had merited puniſhment, but that even now they maintained doctrines, incompatible with the

the civil welfare of the realm. All this you did not ſay in *expreſs* words; but you ſaid it by *inſinuations*, which have a worſe impreſſion on the mind. I had reaſon then to make the reflections, I have made; and I ſubmit them to you.

It cannot, I am ſure, be ſaid that what I have advanced has the leaſt tendency to generate the ſmalleſt ſpark of *new* animoſity. I hope it has rather a tendency to ſtifle and ſuppreſs the *old*. But I have freely delivered my ſentiments, and I thought myſelf authoriſed ſo to do. The ſpirit I wiſh to ſtrengthen in my own mind, and to infuſe into that of others, is the ſpirit of candour and of general benevolence; and I have the happineſs to know, as I obſerved before, that it widely prevails among thoſe of my perſuaſion. Our church, indeed, where it is *eſtabliſhed*, is, in ſome kingdoms, ſupremely intolerant: and ſo is the Proteſtant church in this. Time will ſhew which church ſhall ſet the firſt example

of

of chriſtian moderation. You and we, who have no eſtabliſhment to maintain, and conſequently can be influenced by no allurements of intereſt or honour, have little, it ſhould ſeem to ſurmount, that can obſtruct, in our own minds, the growth of the ſocial paſſions. But if this little be not ſurmounted; what would have been the caſe, had more potent obſtacles ſtood in our way? We have no prejudices againſt you, and we ſhall wiſh you ſucceſs in any future attempts you may make for a redreſs of grievances, provided they be grounded on more generous principles than the laſt. A return of ſimilar ſentiments we have a right to expect from you: but more than this, you have ſufficiently told us, not to look for. We can reſt, God be praiſed! on the equity of our own cauſe, and we will not diſparage that of others to promote it.*

* Dr. Prieſtley in his *Letter* to Mr. Pitt, juſt publiſhed, the ſpirit and general reaſoning of which, I and every friend

friend to liberty muſt applaud, has obſerved p. 7, that had the maxims of the miniſter been adopted before the reformation, the nation had now been *Catholics, and without a ſhadow of a toleration.*—In the hurry of compoſition, did not the Doctor then reflect what has ſo recently been done for the Proteſtants in Germany; what is their preſent ſituation in France, and how much ſoon it will probably be eaſed? If any ſociety of chriſtians are now without a ſhadow of *legal* toleration, they are the Catholics of this *Proteſtant* ſtate.—P. 43 is an obſervation which has been applied to us, though obviouſly never meant by the author. Speaking of the diſcountenance ſhewn by government to the Diſſenters, he ſays, "at the ſame time that it takes into its boſom that part of the community, which was ever noted for its diſloyalty."—If government has taken *us* to its boſom it is with the kindneſs of the bear who preſſes his enemy to his breaſt, or with the careſſes of a ſtep-mother, ſmiling on the child of her huſband. The hiſtory of the houſe of Stuart will tell our loyalty, and from them we have transferred it to the reigning family; but we were not of a humour *lightly* to quit an old maſter. The veering mind as it is never conſtant, ſo is it ſeldom ſincere.

Oscott, April 10, 1787.

To the Rev. Mr. BERINGTON.

DEAR SIR,

I Have juſt read, and with much ſatisfaction, your *Addreſs to the Proteſtant Diſſenters*, in which you appear to me to complain with great juſtice of the want of candour in the *Caſe* they lately preſented to the members of parliament, relating to the Teſt and Corporation Acts; and which gave me much concern when I firſt ſaw it. I muſt object, however, to the compliments which your partiality has beſtowed upon myſelf, and to your miſconſtruction of a paſſage in my *Letter to Mr. Pitt*, in the *Note* ſubjoined to the laſt page of your work.

I had obſerved that, had the maxims of Mr. Pitt been adopted before the reformation, this nation had now been Catholic, " and without a

"ſhadow of a toleration." This you think improper, becauſe ſeveral Catholic ſtates are *now* tolerant, and others are becoming ſo. This I acknowledge, and with the greateſt pleaſure. But at the time to which I referred, there was no ſuch thing as *toleration* known. It was even unknown among Proteſtants till long after this period. Conſequently, had the maxims on which I animadverted (which are hoſtile to all changes, and which would for ever have kept things as they once were) been rigorouſly adhered to, not only would Popery have been the eſtabliſhed religion of this country, but Popery *without a toleration*.

I rejoice in the change that good ſenſe, and the genuine principles of chriſtianity, have of late years produced among the Catholics. I have no doubt but that, in the increaſing light of the age, this liberality will extend itſelf among them; and I am ſorry that Proteſtant ſtates (and eſpecially this country, whoſe greateſt boaſt has been its tolerant ſpirit) ſhould be ſo backward to follow the example you are ſetting them.

I could wiſh, as you do, p. 44, that all who are aggrieved by penal laws in matters of religion, how

how widely ſoever they differ in other reſpects, would join in one common petition for relief; hereby expreſſing their good will to each other, and their ſincere wiſhes that all who wanted relief might partake of it along with themſelves. This is a cauſe in which the Catholic, the Preſbyterian, the Independent, the Baptiſt, and the Quaker, are equally concerned; and by the joint ſupport of which they would certainly have done themſelves credit. Whether the application had been ſucceſsful, or not, the parties would have appeared ſo reſpectable, as to be thought deſerving of ſucceſs, and the meaſure would, no doubt, have prepared the way for a more ſucceſsful application in future time.

You Catholics had the honour to make the propoſal, but we Proteſtant Diſſenters had not the liberality to accede to it. This you candidly excuſe, as proceeding from the bigotry and reſentment which muſt be expected to remain from former times. But I hope that at length the example of ſuch men as yourſelf, of Dr. Geddes, and others whom I could name of your communion, (with whom I think it an honour to be acquainted, and whoſe eſteem I highly value) will aid our

own reflections, and bring us to be as generous as you are.

When I ſaid that the government, while it diſcountenances the Diſſenters, who were always the beſt friends to the preſent reigning family, "took into its boſom that part of the community "which was ever noted for its diſloyalty," you ſay that I have been ſuppoſed by ſome to mean the Catholics. But you juſtly add, that this was obviouſly never meant by me. Indeed, I had no view but to the *tories* in general, and the moſt zealous members of the church of England. It is ſo well known that this is the caſe, and that the Catholics are the moſt oppreſſed of all the Britiſh ſubjects, that if you had not obſerved it, I ſhould not have believed that I could have been ſo miſunderſtood.

The time, I hope, is approaching, when, tho' *we* ſhould continue to be frowned upon, *you* will be reſtored to all your natural rights, and to the fulleſt exerciſe of your religion in this country. There will, at leaſt, be one inſtance of oppreſſion leſs in it, and in this I ſhall ſincerely rejoice. I ſhall more contentedly remain much longer in my preſent condition, to ſee yours

ſo

ſo much bettered. It would be the breaking out of a light, the beams of which might at length reach myſelf. If not, *homo ſum: nihil humani a me alienum puto.*

I am,

With great reſpect,

Dear Sir,

Yours ſincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

BIRMINGHAM,
April 23, 1787.